



## PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY

Stakeholders were identified by Three Rivers Development Corporation and the project team. Stakeholder meetings were arranged by email and/or phone call and were organized to be held either in-person or via phone call by a member of the project team. A total of 25 stakeholder meetings were held between January and August 2024.

The stakeholder meetings focused on collecting input from key community institutions, addressing concerns, and gathering recommendations and considerations. Common issues identified in various stakeholder meetings include:

1. The need to modify utility easements to recreational easements and the challenges posed by private land ownership. To address privacy concerns, fencing systems were suggested.
2. Hazardous materials, especially from old bridges and railroads, were highlighted as potential obstacles, with a recommendation to route trails around such sites.
3. Maintenance was discussed, with a preference for municipal or continuous management partnerships involving cities, counties, and nonprofit groups.
4. The need for parking and restrooms was noted, suggesting the use of boat launches for these facilities.
5. Road crossings require careful planning based on traffic speed and volume, with a call for engagement with DOT Traffic Engineers to ensure safety.

Regarding the levee, the current DEC policy prohibits construction on the levee structure, but trail development on the non-river side might be possible with proper distancing and development within the right of way. The old trolley line presents both challenges and opportunities, with potential partnerships for naming rights and the need for steep slope stabilization and geotechnical assessments. The Chemung Canal, managed by the Chemung County Soil and Water, provides multi-municipal maintenance agreements, aiding in connectivity to the Lackawanna and Catharine Valley Trails.

Municipal engagement involved encouraging discussions with various municipalities the proposed multi-use trail would be constructed through, like Corning, Big Flats, Elmira, Erwin to gauge their interest and prioritize trail development projects. Chemung County Planning is generally supportive of trail development, recognizing the benefits of connecting communities with a multi-use trail and enhancing recreational opportunities.

Trail considerations and recommendations included potential routes like the Wineglass Route and Denison Park Extension, connecting various parks and considering tricky intersections and pedestrian bridge needs. Transportation access was discussed, emphasizing the importance of stops like Corning Hospital.

Floodplain issues were a significant concern, with the DEC limiting trail development on levees. Though it's noted that recreational trails are often recommended uses in flood control protection land areas. Specific challenges included steeper slopes, cliffs, and lack of emergency access points on the southern shore of the Chemung River. Proposed solutions involved developing trails with scenic overlooks and creating barriers from vehicles and sufficient lighting for safety.

Meetings also discussed potential partnerships with the Chemung County Health Department, Finger Lakes Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy, to leverage the opportunity for ongoing engagement during events like the Golden Shoe Challenge and utilizing utility easements for limited connectivity.

Recommendations include extending existing trails and ensuring connections to significant points like the Painted Post Trail and Lackawanna/Catharine Valley Trails. Finally, Corning Incorporated's involvement was highlighted with consideration of Corning Incorporated land holdings, potential routes, important assets to connect to, and impact on workforce and quality of life. Discussions included potential routes, connections to parks, and addressing physical barriers like railroads and rivers for improved trail construction and amenities.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

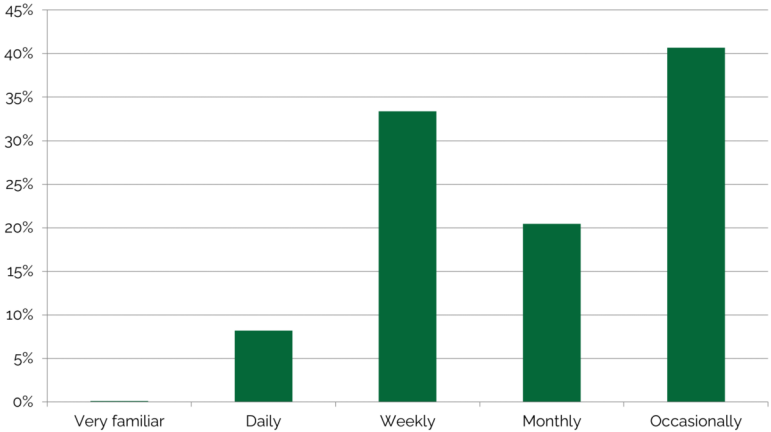
Through input provided by the Steering Committee, suggestions fielded by Stakeholders, and demographic information analyzed, the project team identified a need for an intentional and strategic engagement process for seeking public input and feedback. This process included hosting open house events, developing a community survey, and developing an online interactive mapping tool. The large, diverse study area includes numerous municipalities and challenges with property ownership. Additionally, because of the long-term nature of trail development projects, learning the preferences of various desired trail uses, including equitable design preferences, was a goal. Public engagement has been crucial in shaping the Chemung River Greenway Feasibility Study. The insights gathered from the community will help ensure the project is both feasible and aligned with public interests.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The project team with guidance and review by the Steering Committee, developed a public community survey. This survey was launched on February 27, 2024. It was made accessible online and remained open until June 2, 2024. The primary objective of this survey was to collect input from community members and visitors of all municipalities included within the project area, as well as to identify opportunities and challenges around potential trail locations. Efforts made to encourage community members to take the community survey included advertising through local news outlets, as well as distributing project informational flyers and quarter sheets with QR codes linking to the project website to local community spaces. In total, the community survey received 884 responses.

The start of the survey sought to gather insights into how respondents currently utilize existing multi-use trails. 41% of the 800+ respondents stated they utilize existing multi-use trails occasionally; however, an impressive 33% of respondents stated they utilize existing multi-use trails on a weekly basis.

How often do you currently use multi-use trails?

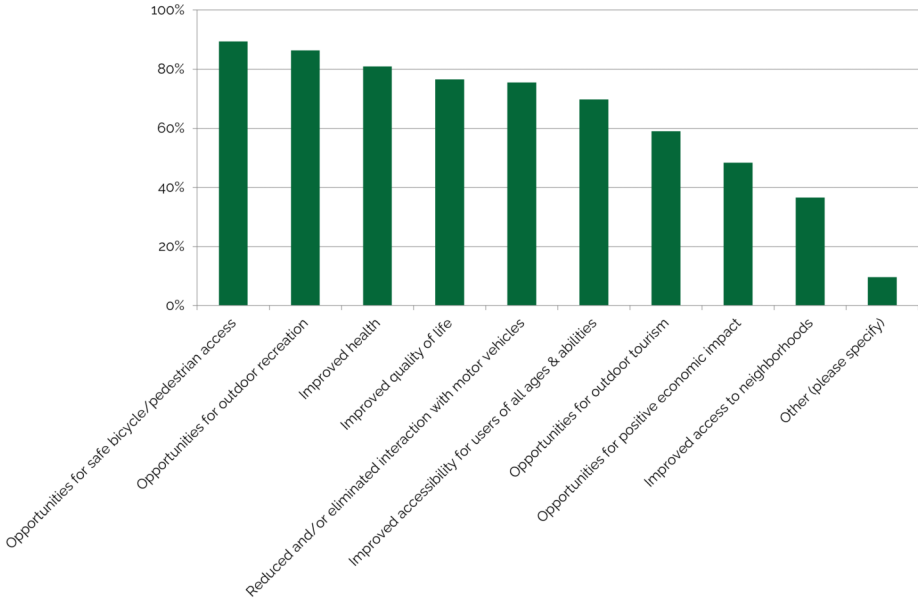


Perceptions of Opportunities and Challenges

Next, the survey sought to gather insights on opportunities and/or challenges with the implementation of the proposed multi-use trail to help the project team uncover overall community goals of the project. When asked about opportunities they think will be provided with the proposed multi-use trail, respondents were presented with a series of various trail benefits.

The highest selected options chosen by respondents include opportunities for safe bicycle/pedestrian access (89%), opportunities for outdoor recreation (86%), improved health (81%), improved quality of life (77%), reduced and/or eliminated interaction with motor vehicles (76%), and improved accessibility for users of all ages and abilities (70%). These responses illustrate that respondents have a strong desire to utilize multi-use trails, as well as have a community asset that will have an overall positive impact on their respective communities.

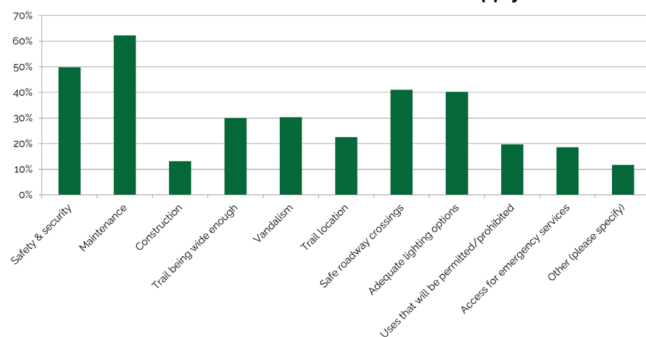
Which benefits do you think will come with the proposed multi-use trail?



When asked about concerns respondents have with the proposed multi-use trail, respondents were presented with a variety of potential challenges. The highest selected options chosen by respondents include maintenance (62%), safety and security (50%), safe roadway crossings (41%), and adequate lighting options (40%).

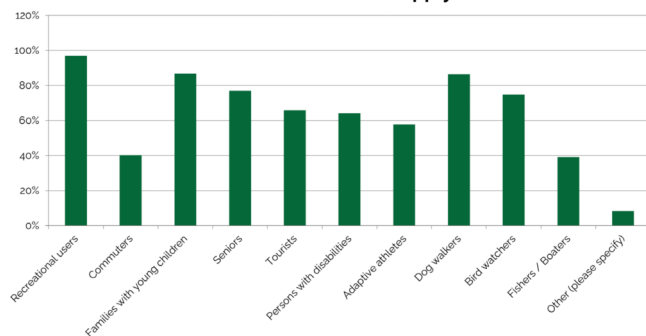
Additional concerns were expressed, some of which include property ownership, funding, crime, vandalism, access to parking, and whether the trail will be wide enough to accommodate those utilizing the trail by bike, foot, or wheelchair. These responses illustrate that community members want to ensure that an added community asset will be safe for all users to use at all times.

**What concerns do you have about the proposed multi-use trail? Please select all that apply.**



Next, respondents were asked about who the proposed multi-use trail would serve. Respondents were presented with a variety of options; the highest selected options chosen by respondents include recreational users (i.e., cyclists, pedestrians, and roller bladers) (97%), families with young children (87%), dog walkers (86%), seniors (77%), and bird watchers (75%). Additional trail uses noted by respondents include equestrian use / access, educational groups, local running groups, and cross-country skiers. This illustrates the wide variety of uses that community members envision a multi-use trail benefitting.

**Who would the proposed multi-use trail serve? Please select all that apply.**

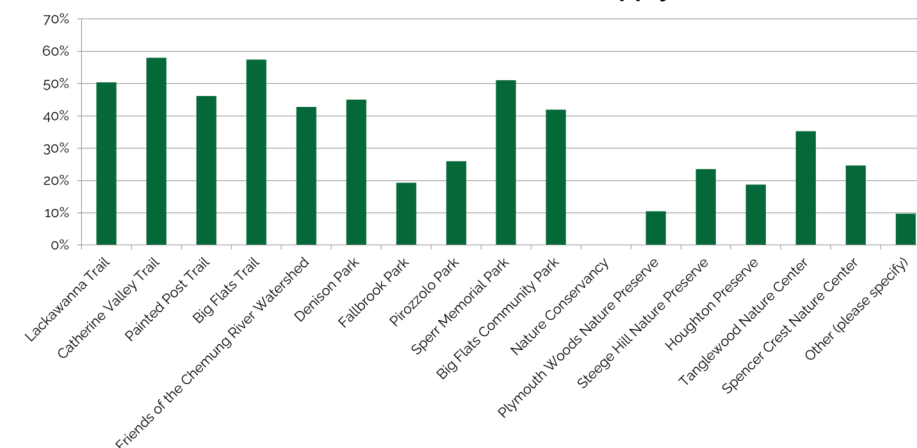


## Trail Connectivity

The project boundary has several existing trails, local parks, and nature preserves, and nature centers. The survey sought to gather insights on popular outdoor amenities and if respondents would like to see the proposed multi-use trail connected to these amenities. When asked which existing community amenities they would like to see connected to the proposed multi-use trail, respondents selected several options based on the type of amenity. For existing trails, the highest selected options chosen by respondents include Catharine Valley Trail (58%), Big Flats Trail (57%), Lackawanna Trail (50%), and Painted Post Trail (48%). For existing parks, the highest selected options chosen by respondents include Sperr Memorial Park (51%), Denison Park (45%), and Big Flats Community Park (42%). For existing nature preserves / centers, the highest selected option chosen by respondents include Tanglewood Nature Center (35%) and Steege Hill Nature Preserve (24%).

This shows that community members primarily want the proposed multi-use trail to primarily connect to other existing multi-use trails, as well as to various local parks located around the project boundary, to accomplish the goal of having improved access to local community assets without needing to utilize a personal vehicle to access them. The lack of engagement with The Nature Conservancy lands indicates that community members are not aware that the Tanglewood Nature Center (35%) includes land conservation easement and partnership with The Nature Conservancy.

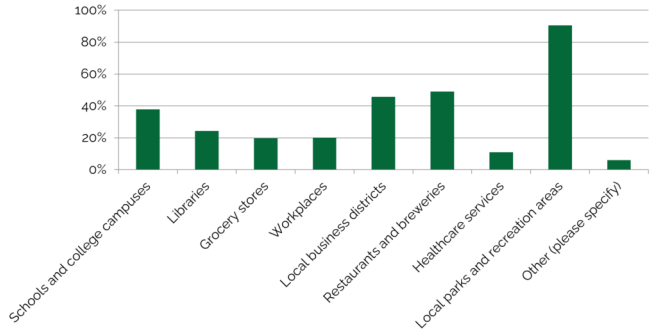
**What existing trails, local parks, and/or nature preserves would you like to see connected to the proposed multi-use trail? Please select all that apply.**





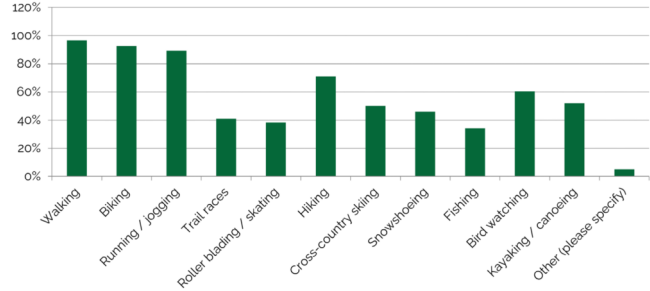
One goal of the proposed multi-use trail implementation is to improve connectivity to local hubs or communities throughout the various municipalities the multi-use trail will travel through. When asked about opportunities for the trail to connect to these local hubs, responses primarily favored the connectivity of local parks and recreation areas (91%), followed by restaurants and breweries (49%), local business districts (46%), and schools and college campuses (38%). Additional responses from respondents include museums, medical services, and public art.

**What are the target hubs or opportunities?**  
Please select all that apply.



Year-round trail use has been identified as a desired outcome for the proposed multi-use trail. When respondents were asked which seasonal recreational activities they anticipate the proposed multi-use trail being utilized for, a variety of options were selected for all seasonal conditions. The highest selected options chosen by respondents include walking (97%), biking (93%), running / jogging (89%), and hiking (71%). Other uses noted include equestrian use, bird watching, and educational programs for nature enthusiast groups. While active recreation is anticipated to be the highest utilization of this proposed trail, the results of this question show that respondents intend to use it for various purposes beyond active recreation.

**What seasonal activities do you anticipate the proposed multi-use trail being utilized for?**  
Please select all that apply.



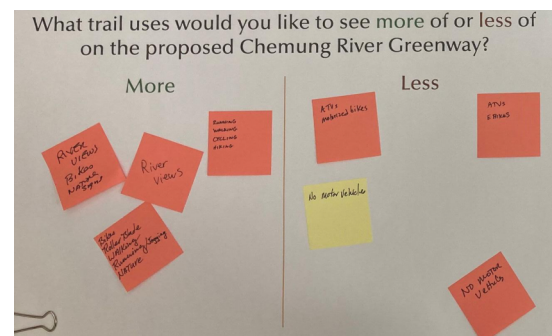
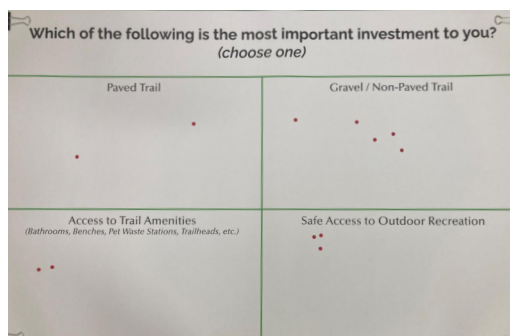
To conclude the community survey, we gave respondents the opportunity to express what excites them most about this project. Below is a word cloud of the most frequently used words in their responses.



Six open-house style public engagement events were held between March and May 2024 at the following:

Each of these open house events had five stations with comment boards at most stations for participants to interact with. These stations included:

1. **Project Overview** – This station gave context on the project as a whole and what the desired outcome of the feasibility study was, as well as provided comment boards with probing questions for participants to provide feedback.
2. **Community Feedback** – This station gave participants the opportunity to take the community survey and/or interact with the online mapping tool.
3. **Project Area** – This station had participants help gauge where they think the proposed multi-use trail would provide the best location by providing feedback directly on maps of the complete project area. Participants were asked to use colored circle stickers to identify areas with opportunities (blue) and challenges (red), as well as the option to leave comments on separate post-it notes to explain why they chose to mark an area as an opportunity or challenge.
4. **Potential Designs** – This station showcased various trail design features that could be included along the proposed trail. Comment boards with probing questions were also provided at this station to gauge which different amenities and features would be preferred along this trail.
5. **Existing Conditions** – This station presented the overall findings from the existing conditions assessment. These findings were presented by a member of our project team and displayed on a projector. The member of our project team assigned to this station elaborated on items as needed and answered questions asked by participants.



The open house events varied in structure and attendance, reflecting diverse community interests and concerns regarding the proposed multi-use trail. The Elmira College Teach-In, held on March 20th, attracted 385 participants and was distinct from other events as it took place on a college campus. Meanwhile, the Big Flats Community Center event, also on March 20th, had 22 attendees who highlighted opportunities such as improved connectivity and outdoor access but also expressed concerns about privacy, safety, and trail materials. A preference for continuous linear trails and a gravel surface was noted among the participants.

Subsequent events, including those at Steele Memorial Library on April 1st and the Town of Elmira Community Center on April 22nd, had 19 and 17 participants, respectively. At these gatherings, attendees emphasized the importance of pedestrian and cyclist safety, the potential for small business growth, and increased outdoor recreation. Concerns were raised about community support, maintenance, and safety. The preference for continuous linear trails and gravel surfaces remained consistent across these events.

The final events at Southeast Steuben County Library on April 23rd and the GlassFest on May 25th had lower attendance, with 12 participants at the library and a non-traditional setup at the Wineglass event. These events primarily focused on providing informational overviews through scanned boards rather than direct participant engagement. Overall, the open house series revealed a strong community interest in the multi-use trail, with significant emphasis on safety, maintenance, and the desire for natural, non-paved trail surfaces.